


CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

116TH CONGRESS IN REVIEW



PREPARED BY

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS STAFF



A NOTE FROM CPC CHAIRS PRAMILA JAYAPAL & MARK POCAN

Thank you for your trust and support as we have grown and strengthened the Progressive Caucus over the last two years. The 116th Congress has been a time of renewal and reimagining for the CPC. We entered the majority with the largest Progressive Caucus in history, with nearly 100 members. Our members represent the racial and geographic diversity of our nation, hailing from rural, suburban, and urban districts, from Democratic strongholds and purple districts.

Spurred by this new energy and vision, the Progressive Caucus has spent the last two years fighting for policies that restore power to the hands of the people. We became the first Caucus to endorse impeaching this lawless President, advocated for low-wage workers during and in the wake of the longest-ever government shutdown, fought for sweeping policies to protect families and workers in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, and demanded transformative and structural reforms to our criminal justice system and federal institutions as part of the long-overdue reckoning on racial justice. We have also looked inward to improve our functioning as a caucus and ensure we are a nimble and member-driven organization prepared to leverage power as we welcome President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris to the White House.

For the first time since its founding, the Progressive Caucus has been able to hire four full-time staffers to provide the Caucus with a wide range of member services: an Executive Director, a Policy Director, a Communications Director, and a Caucus Associate. We have also revised and updated our Progressive Promise. Our renewed Progressive Promise is rooted in four key principles: (1) Advancing justice, dignity, and peace for all; (2) Tackling systems of oppression and dismantling structural racism and discrimination; (3) Taking on systems that privilege the wealthy and powerful to demand a government and economy that works for the people; and (4) A commitment to sweeping, transformative change.

With these goals in mind, we welcome the challenges and opportunities ahead in the 117th Congress as we address the pandemic, rescue our economy, save our planet, and restore power to the hands of the people. Since its founding in 1991, the Progressive Caucus has been the voice for working people in Congress. As we enter our 30th year, we take on this responsibility with renewed urgency and deep gratitude to all who have entrusted us with this essential work.

The report that follows is a summary of some of the work we've accomplished over the last two years with an eye to building upon these successes in the 117th Congress. None of this work would have been possible without the dedicated efforts of our Progressive Caucus members or the contributions of activists, organizers, and advocacy groups who spent years working to achieve these victories. We are eternally grateful for your work and look forward to continuing this collective action in 2021.

In Solidarity,

Mark Pocan, CPC Co-Chair

Pramila Jayapal, CPC Co-Chair

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION ON EXCLUSIVE COMMITTEES

In the 116th Congress, the Congressional Progressive Caucus prioritized ensuring progressive representation on exclusive committees that shape some of the most powerful industries and drive legislation on rebalancing the rules of the economy. The CPC negotiated and then secured a commitment from Speaker Pelosi to have proportional CPC representation – approximately 40 percent – on those four key committees: Financial Services, Energy & Commerce, Ways & Means, and Appropriations.

The advocacy of the CPC ensured that strong, progressive voices ended up on those committees, bolstering the work of the CPC and bringing new energy and momentum to corporate oversight, fair tax reforms, taking on Big Pharma, and rooting out corruption. In the Financial Services Committee, progressives have set the agenda and brought unprecedented oversight to address corruption, price-gouging, and ensure robust consumer protections.

H.R. 1, THE FOR THE PEOPLE ACT

The Progressive Caucus was instrumental in passing H.R. 1, the For the People Act – the largest anti-corruption and pro-democracy reform in decades. This bill incorporated a wide range of proposals from the Progressive Caucus, and ideas long championed by the Progressive wing of the party, including public campaign financing, limiting the corrupting influence of the revolving door, and knocking down barriers to the ballot box. At the request of the Progressive Caucus, H.R. 1 also included a provision to require the disclosure of business tax returns from the president, vice-president and presidential candidates.



WAIVING THE PAYGO POINT OF ORDER FOR CRITICAL BILLS



The CPC believes that PAYGO - which requires every piece of legislation that raises spending on mandatory programs or cuts taxes be offset with either tax increases or spending cuts elsewhere in the budget - impedes effective policy making because it holds critical investments hostage to arbitrary budget constraints and codifies a flawed view of deficit spending. At the outset of the 116th Congress, the CPC secured a commitment from Rules Chairman McGovern that

PAYGO would not be an impediment to the passage of key progressive priorities. Over these two years, the PAYGO rule was waived 34 times. The waiver allowed critical progressive priority bills to be considered on the floor, including the American Dream and Promise Act, the Raise the Wage Act, the Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act, and the Washington, D.C. Admission Act.



PREVENTING WAR WITH IRAN

As the Trump Administration took action to single-handedly destroy the historic Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and lead the United States down a path of dangerous escalation toward war with Iran, the CPC was at the forefront of calling on Congress to take action to de-escalate tensions and to prevent President Trump from unilaterally starting an unconstitutional war with Iran. The CPC unified the Democratic Caucus around passing two key bills to prevent the Trump Administration from conducting an unconstitutional and unauthorized war with Iran: legislation to repeal the 2002 Authorization of Use of Military Force authored by Congresswoman Barbara Lee and legislation to prevent any funds from being used for an unauthorized war with Iran sponsored by Congressman Ro Khanna.



YEMEN WAR POWERS ACT

After a year-long effort, the Progressive Caucus led the charge in Congress to successfully pass a War Powers Resolution (WPR) to end the United States' involvement in the war on Yemen with strong bipartisan and bicameral support. The war in Yemen is a humanitarian catastrophe which has resulted in tens of thousands of innocent civilians being killed and millions facing famine and the United States' active participation in the Saudi-led bombing campaign in Yemen had never been authorized by Congress. The Yemen WPR passed in April 2019 and was a historic step in ending the needless suffering in Yemen and to restore congressional oversight on matters of war and peace. Despite strong bipartisan and bicameral support to end the United States' active participation in the war in Yemen and the resulting humanitarian catastrophe, President Trump vetoed the bill. The Progressive Caucus continued its efforts to end U.S. participation in the Saudi-led war in Yemen and successfully secured the inclusion of language in the FY20 National Defense Authorization Act to end in-flight refueling of Saudi-coalition aircraft engaged in hostile operations in Yemen.

MEDICARE FOR ALL HEARINGS



At the beginning of the 116th Congress, the Progressive Caucus was able to secure a commitment from Speaker Pelosi to hold hearings on the Medicare For All Act in key committees. Over the past two years, there have been three separate hearings on the Medicare For All Act in the key committees of Rules, Ways & Means, and Energy & Commerce.

These hearings have been instrumental in educating the public about the Medicare For All Act and building support for a single-payer health care system. [Watch Ady Barkan's powerful testimony before the House Rules Committee here.](#)

SOME PEOPLE ARGUE THAT ALTHOUGH MEDICARE FOR ALL IS A GREAT IDEA, WE NEED TO MOVE SLOWLY TO GET THERE. BUT I NEEDED MEDICARE FOR ALL YESTERDAY. MILLIONS OF PEOPLE NEED IT TODAY. THE TIME TO PASS THIS LAW IS NOW.

- ADY BARKAN

H.R. 6, THE DREAM & PROMISE ACT



At the beginning of the 116th Congress, the House acted to pass one of the biggest Progressive Caucus priorities of the last two decades: legal protections for Dreamers and TPS and DED recipients. This bill – the most progressive immigration bill to ever pass Congress – was the result of years of inside-outside organizing by activists, immigrant youth, and members of the Progressive Caucus. The passage of the Dream & Promise Act serves as a powerful recognition of the millions of Dreamers and TPS and DED recipients who have built their lives here and are American in every way except on paper.

H.R. 582, THE RAISE THE WAGE ACT

In 2015, leaders of the Congressional Progressive Caucus became the first in Congress to introduce and back a federal minimum wage of \$15 an hour. The passage of the Raise the Wage Act in July of 2019 was the culmination of years of work by progressive leaders, unions, and on the ground activists fighting for an end to poverty wages and greater worker power. Progressives also successfully beat back poison-pill proposals to lower the minimum wage, exclude workers, and regionalize the minimum wage, which would have undercut wages primarily among women and people of color.

The successful passage of the Raise the Wage Act – which grew from a progressive priority to a bill supported by nearly every Democratic Member of Congress and several Republicans – is a roadmap for passing transformative bills through Congress that rebalance the scales for workers and put money in the pockets of working families.



H.R. 3, THE ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS LOWER DRUG COSTS NOW ACT



One of the major priorities of the Progressive Caucus during this Congress was passing the strongest bill possible to make prescription drugs more affordable for the public. The Progressive Caucus worked hard to strengthen and improve H.R. 3, the Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act. Because of the advocacy of the CPC and its membership, the final version of the bill doubled the number of drugs that could be negotiated each year from twenty-five to fifty and included the Jayapal Amendment which prevents

price-gouging for the more than 150 million Americans with private health care plans. At the urging of the CPC, the bill also replaced arbitration with direct negotiation and gave the HHS Secretary the authority to negotiate the prices of new drugs coming onto the market. These critical improvements made the bill substantially stronger for the American people and created a progressive framework for future drug price negotiation legislation.



SECURING PAID FAMILY LEAVE FOR FEDERAL WORKERS

The CPC has long led the call for Congress to pass legislation to provide American families with the tools they need to have successful careers and strong families. The CPC called on Congress to pass a bold paid family leave bill so that workers no longer have to choose between their careers and having a family. After years of working hand-in-hand with paid leave advocates and members of the CPC, the House passed the Maloney amendment to provide paid parental leave for federal workers as part of the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, which provides federal workers with up to 12 weeks of paid leave for the birth of a child, an adoption, or the start of foster care. The CPC will continue to advocate for robust paid family leave for all American workers, including for paid caregiving leave.

KILLING THE TURBOTAX GIVEAWAY

The Progressive Caucus was instrumental in killing the so-called 'TurboTax Giveaway.' which would have prohibited the IRS from developing its own Free File software to help consumers prepare their taxes. The prohibition, brought to light by ProPublica's reporting, was the result of the lobbying of big corporations, including H&R Block and TurboTax.

Due to the advocacy of the Progressive Caucus – and members including Congresswoman Katie Porter and Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez – a revised version of the Taxpayer First Act eliminating the tax prep corporate giveaways was brought to the floor and passed in June of 2019.

H.R. 2474, THE PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE ACT

Working alongside partners in the labor movement, the Progressive Caucus' unwavering support and advocacy for the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act ensured that the strongest pro-worker legislation to ever pass through Congress was successful. The PRO Act is bold, transformative legislation that addresses growing inequality and a rigged economy. The bill takes long overdue action to

modernize decades-old labor laws and strengthen protections for workers, including the right to organize a union and bargain for higher wages, and better benefits and working conditions. The PRO Act is a critical roadmap to build worker power, stop the exploitation of workers and close the growing income gap between CEOs and hard-working Americans.

BACK PAY FOR FEDERAL CONTRACTORS

The Progressive Caucus was instrumental in securing a House vote on back pay for low-wage federal contractors impacted by the 2018-2019 federal shutdown. The Progressive Caucus was the first caucus within Congress to call for the inclusion of back pay for federal contractors in the wake of the government shutdown. An estimated 580,000 federal contractors lost wages during the 35-day 2018-2019 shutdown, many of whom perform essential work for low wages as janitors, security guards, and cafeteria workers. Members of the Progressive Caucus authored a letter to House and Senate leadership urging the inclusion of back pay for these workers in the FY2020 Appropriations package. Back pay for federal contractors passed the House in June of 2019. The CPC is committed to ensuring that low-wage federal contract workers are protected in event of any future government funding stoppages.



PANDEMIC RELIEF THAT MEETS THE SCALE OF THE CURRENT CRISIS



As the U.S. faced unprecedented economic and public health challenges at the start of a global pandemic, the CPC was at the forefront calling for bold progressive policies to protect families, workers, and public health. In partnership with outside organizers and activists, the CPC successfully advocated for the inclusion of many progressive priorities in the HEROES Act including: expanding direct payments to ITIN filer and adult dependents; expanding Earned Income Tax Credit and increasing SNAP benefits; the suspension of up to \$10,000 in student aid and additional protections for student

borrowers; the suspension of debt collection and a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions; and strong vote-by-mail provisions.

In the CARES Act, the CPC helped secure direct payments of \$1200 for families, enhanced unemployment, and oversight on bailout dollars for corporations. And throughout the year, the CPC has advocated for renewed direct payments for families, culminating in the passage of stand-alone legislation to provide \$2000 survival checks on December 28th, 2020.



REMOTE HEARINGS ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Over the course of several months in the spring and summer of 2020, the Progressive Caucus held four high-profile hearings to consider bold ideas to address the pandemic and protect families. The first hearing, held on April 29th and chaired by CPC Co-Chairs Pramila Jayapal and Mark Pocan, focused on the need for expanded worksharing and a paycheck guarantee to prevent layoffs. On Wednesday, May 6th, the CPC held its second hearing, focused on the disproportionate toll of the epidemic on communities of color. On May 13th, the CPC held its third hearing on strategies for ramping up testing and contact tracing to safely reopen the economy. And on June 10th, the CPC held its fourth hearing on rooting out corruption and ensuring robust oversight of COVID relief funds. All four hearings are available to watch on the [CPC Facebook page](#).

NO BAN ACT & ACCESS TO COUNSEL ACT

The Progressive Caucus was instrumental in ensuring the passage of the NO BAN Act from Congresswoman Judy Chu. The passage of this bill on July 22, 2020 marked the first time in American history that Congress voted to protect and affirm the civil rights of Muslims. The NO BAN Act would prohibit any president from enacting xenophobic and exclusionary bans that discriminated on the basis of religion.

At the urging of the CPC, the House also passed the Access to Counsel Act from Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, which would ensure that individuals with legal status who are held for extended periods of time at U.S. points of entry have access to legal counsel.

REDUCING THE BLOATED & WASTEFUL PENTAGON BUDGET BY 10 PERCENT

In the face of out-of-control, wasteful and bloated Pentagon spending, the Progressive Caucus championed an amendment to the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act that would cut Pentagon spending by 10 percent. A 10 percent defense cut, amounting to \$74 billion, would save more than the total budgets of the CDC, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Park Service and the Department of Housing and Urban Development combined. Because of the advocacy of the CPC, the 10 percent cut

amendment from Congressman Mark Pocan and Congresswoman Barbara Lee received a floor vote during consideration of the FY2021 NDAA. This amendment garnered unprecedented support -- both within Congress and among the public -- and received 93 votes, the highest vote total for cutting defense spending in modern history. In the coming Congress, progressives will continue to fight to address bloated Pentagon spending and redirect these resources to human needs.

H.R. 3884, THE MARIJUANA OPPORTUNITY REINVESTMENT & EXPUNGEMENT ACT

In November of this year, the House passed the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act, historic legislation that addresses decades of harm from the failed and racist War on Drugs by legalizing marijuana at the federal level and by dedicating resources to the communities most harmed by the senseless policy of prohibition. The CPC was instrumental in building support for the MORE Act and advocating for transformative policies that address the gross inequities and injustices in our criminal justice system.



EMERGENCY HEARING ON POLITICAL INTERFERENCE AT USPS



Amid growing concern about politically-motivated mail slowdowns at the United States Postal Service ahead of the November elections, the Progressive Caucus held a high-profile, public hearing investigating the role of US Postmaster General Louis DeJoy in sabotaging the functioning of the postal service. The hearing featured critical testimony from the former Inspector General and Vice Chairman of the USPS Board of Governors, David Williams, about the interference of Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin in the operations of USPS. Mark Dimondstein,

President of the American Postal Workers Union, Tammy Patrick, Senior Advisor on Elections at Democracy Fund Voice, and Rosemary Enobakhare, the Campaign Director of Health Care Voter, also testified at the hearing about the impact of USPS slowdowns on elections, postal workers, and the safe and reliable delivery of medicine to underserved communities. The hearing was covered widely by national press outlets including [the New York Times](#) and [NBC News](#).

[The full hearing is available to watch here.](#)

PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS CLIMATE CHANGE RECOMMENDATIONS

For far too long, corporate profits and special interests have been prioritized above the health and safety of our planet and communities. American families are experiencing the consequences of decades of inaction on the climate crisis - from historic wildfires and prolonged droughts to record-breaking storms and once-in-a-century floods. The House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis' Climate Action Plan set forth transformative and comprehensive recommendations that

serve as a road map to address climate change. [Thirty-seven proposals and bills recommended by the Progressive Caucus were included in the Action Plan](#), including the Environmental Justice for All Act; a prohibition on legal immunity for polluters; workplace rights as a cornerstone of climate justice; and ending egregious tax breaks for large oil and gas companies. [Read the full CPC climate recommendations here.](#)



PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE REFORMS

At the end of the 116th Congress, the Progressive Caucus convened a task force to review and modernize the internal structures and governance of the CPC. After months of work, the task force recommended a series of improvements to strengthen cohesion, member engagement and unity within the CPC. These changes -

which were approved by the full CPC in November of 2020 - restructured the executive board, instituted attendance and whip response requirements for CPC members, updated the Progressive Promise, and built structures for greater cohesion in cosponsoring and floor votes on key progressive priorities.



THE PROGRESSIVE PROMISE

THE CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS BELIEVES IN GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, AND FOR THE PEOPLE. OUR PROGRESSIVE PROMISE IS ROOTED IN FOUR CORE PRINCIPLES.

1. ADVANCING JUSTICE, DIGNITY, AND PEACE FOR ALL.

At the Progressive Caucus, we believe that government must be the great equalizer of opportunity for everyone. We are committed to passing legislation that advances justice, dignity, and peace for all people.

- Realizing the goal of a universal, high-quality, Medicare For All health care system for all.
- Advancing the right of every American to retire with security and dignity.
- Ending poverty and income inequality and securing a living wage for all people.
- Protecting the fundamental right to organize. Ending mass incarceration and advancing equal justice under the law.
- Taking urgent, inclusive, and transformative action on climate change.
- Upholding the fundamental reproductive rights of all people.
- Ending our forever wars, cutting the bloated Pentagon budget, and prioritizing diplomacy.
- Advancing humane, fair, and just immigration laws.
- Advancing racial justice and equity.

2. TACKLING SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION AND DISMANTLING STRUCTURAL RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION.

Embedded in our nation's history is a painful legacy of oppression, racism, and genocide. At the Progressive Caucus, we believe that elected leaders have an obligation to confront this legacy and dismantle the systems of oppression and discrimination that allow racism to persist in this nation. In order for any legislation to be truly inclusive and transformative, it must advance the goal of racial justice.

- Advancing racial justice and equity in every policy.
- Supporting a truth commission and reparations to address and repair the continued effects of slavery and discrimination.
- Transforming our budgets and priorities to reinvest in Black, Brown, and indigenous communities and reimagine the role of institutions that exacerbate injustice and inequality.
- Challenging harmful stereotypes and efforts that demonize immigrant, Black, Brown, indigenous, and LGBTQ communities and actively opposing any legislation or policy that marginalizes those communities.

THE PROGRESSIVE PROMISE (CONT.)

3. TAKING ON SYSTEMS THAT PRIVILEGE THE WEALTHY AND POWERFUL TO DEMAND A GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR THE PEOPLE.

We believe elected officials should be beholden to the people – not to wealthy donors and powerful CEOs. At the Progressive Caucus, we reject pay-to-play and revolving door politics and fight for a democracy where the power is in the hands of the people, not concentrated among the rich and well-connected. We reject the failed politics of the past that prioritized the deregulation of financial industries and big polluters and tax breaks for the wealthy and big corporations over the well-being of the public. And we support bold policies to close the gap between the rich and everyday Americans and ensure our government delivers essential services to every person in this country.

- Ensuring regulation of industry with strong consumer protections.
- Strengthening oversight of financial institutions.
- Democratizing our society by getting money out of politics, eliminating political corruption, and protecting and expanding access to the ballot box.
- Ensuring that all of our economic and tax policies address or decrease income inequality.
- Protecting the federal government's role in delivering essential goods, taking on monopolies, and disciplining markets.

4. A COMMITMENT TO SWEEPING, TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE.

Recognizing that the problems facing this country are enormous, we are committed to delivering solutions that meet the scale of the crisis. Faced with decades of disinvestment in working class communities, unprecedented income inequality, and a federal budget that fails to meet the needs of millions, we believe that Congress must take sweeping action to deliver the bold policies that this moment demands. The challenges facing this nation are structural – and Congress must be deliberate and explicit in dismantling these institutional barriers to prosperity, peace, and justice.

- Demanding bold and visionary legislation to address the needs in every community and rejecting incrementalist approaches that fail to deliver urgent transformative change.
- Opposing counterproductive and false narratives on government deficits that have led to decades-long disinvestment in low-income communities, communities of color, families, and working people.
- Reversing decades-long disinvestment in low-income communities, communities of color, families, and working people.
- Delivering structural change that unrigs the rules for working people and forces the wealthy to contribute to our shared prosperity.

